

October 13, 2006 - Slaughter Urges Declaration of Emergency Following Snowstorm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, October 13, 2006

Slaughter Urges Declaration of Emergency Following Snowstorm

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, has urged Governor George Pataki to declare a state of emergency in The City of Buffalo and Erie County, as well as surrounding areas, following the heavy snowstorm which hit the area yesterday.

"This storm has impacted hundreds of thousands of Buffalo and Erie residents, and they deserve assistance as quickly as it can be provided," Rep. Slaughter said. "But we can't engage federal resources to respond to this storm until a state of emergency has been declared. I'm urging Governor Pataki to declare an emergency so that we can do everything possible to restore power and help those inundated by the storm."

Rep. Slaughter is also in contact with the National Grid and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to monitor the extent of power outages caused by the storm. Currently, 247,000 regional citizens are without power.

The current snowfall is expected to stop by noon, and winds are expected to pick up this afternoon to between 15 and 20 mph. More snow is possible on Saturday.

Syracuse clean-up crews could only get as far as Batavia this morning, while crews working through the night focused mostly on between 60 and 70 9-11 calls they received. Many more rescue and clean-up crews are expected in the coming days. The challenge, officials say, remains getting them to where they are needed.

Authorities hope to have a damage assessment completed by late Friday afternoon, and have told Rep. Slaughter that a significant restoration of power will start this weekend.

IMPORTANT EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS:

"While power lines are down, many phone lines remain operational," Rep. Slaughter said. "I therefore urge those who have power to get these numbers to your neighbors who do not."

Buffalo and Erie County citizens in need following electricity outages can contact the following emergency numbers:

Emergency Power Outage: 1-800-Niagara

County Line: 716-681-6670

City Line: 716-851-4890

Customer Service Number for the National Grid: 1-800-642-4272

BACKGROUND: EMERGENCY TIPS FROM THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Staying Warm Indoors

If your heat goes out during a winter storm, you can keep warm by closing off rooms you do not need.

- 1. Use only safe sources of alternative heat such as a fireplace, small well-vented wood or coal stove or portable space heaters. Always follow manufacturer's instructions.
- 2. Dress in layers of lightweight clothing and wear a cap.
- 3. Eat well-balanced meals.

Losing your heat when winter's winds are howling is not pleasant. However, by following these simple tips, you will weather the storm more comfortably.

Protecting Water Pipes

To prevent the mess and aggravation of frozen water pipes, protect your home, apartment or business by following the simple steps below.

Before Cold Weather

- 1. Locate and insulate pipes most susceptible to freezing, typically those near outer walls, in crawl spaces or in the attic.
- 2. Wrap pipes with heat tape (UL approved).
- 3. Seal any leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located.
- 4. Disconnect garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.

When It's Cold

- 1. Let hot and cold water trickle at night from a faucet on an outside wall.
- 2. Open cabinet doors to allow more heat to get to un-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall.
- 3. Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.

- 4. If you plan to be away: (1) Have someone check your house daily to make sure the heat is still on to prevent freezing, or (2) drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).

If Pipes Freeze

- 1. Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst. Stopping the water flow minimize the damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
- 2. Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch.
- 3. Always be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water.

If The Lights Go Out

If you lose electrical service during the winter, follow these tips:

- 1. Call your utility first to determine area repair schedules. Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate power has been restored.
- 2. To help prevent freezing pipes, turn on faucets slightly. Running water will not freeze as quickly.
- 3. Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning:
 - DO NOT operate generators indoors; the motor emits deadly carbon monoxide gas.

- DO NOT use charcoal to cook indoors. It, too, can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide gas.
- DO NOT use your gas oven to heat your home -- prolonged use of an open oven in a closed house can create carbon monoxide gas.
- Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation.

- 4. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help reduce food spoilage.

Generator Safety

Electric generators can provide you with piece of mind and convenience when you are faced with a temporary loss of electric service.

Follow these safety guidelines when operating a generator:

- 1. Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. If possible, have your generator installed by a qualified electrician.
- 2. Run generators outside, downwind of structures. NEVER run a generator indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generator's exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces. Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- 3. Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If your generator has a detachable fuel tank remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling.
- 4. Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Most of the small, home-use portable generators produce from 350 to 12,000 watts of power. Overloading your generator can damage it, the appliances connected to it, and may cause a fire. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- 5. Keep children away from generators at all times.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the United States. Such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys can produce the colorless, odorless gas.

The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months.

- 1. NEVER run generators indoors. Open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater.
- 2. NEVER use charcoal to cook indoors.
- 3. NEVER use a gas oven to heat your home.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital.

Fire Safety

Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters can add a cozy glow, but make sure you are using them safely.

- 1. Always keep a screen around an open flame.
- 2. Never use gasoline to start your fireplace.
- 3. Never burn charcoal indoors.
- 4. Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.
- 5. When using alternative heat sources such as a fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation. Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.
- 6. Have your chimney checked before the season for creosote buildup -- and then clean it.
- 7. Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors ... and make sure they work! Establish a well-planned escape route with the entire family.

Kerosene Heaters

If you use kerosene heaters to supplement your regular heating fuel, or as an emergency source of heat, follow these safety tips:

- 1. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- 2. Use only the correct fuel for your unit.
- 3. Refuel outdoors ONLY and only when the unit is cool.
- 4. Keep the heater at least three feet away from furniture and other flammable objects.
- 5. When using the heater, use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.

Remember, the fire hazard is greatly increased in the winter because alternate heating sources often are used without following proper safety precautions.

Clearing Your Roof

As the snow and ice continues to build up, homeowners should think about safety before trying to clear the snow from their roof.

Here are some safety tips:

- 1. When possible, use long-handled snow rakes or poles.
- 2. If you must use a ladder, make certain that the base is securely anchored. Ask a friend, neighbor or adult family member to hold the ladder while you climb.
- 3. Know where the snow is going to fall before clearing the area.
- 4. Make certain not to contact electrical wires.
- 5. If possible, do not attempt to clear the roof alone.
- 6. If you are afraid of heights or think the job is too big for you, HIRE HELP.

Clearing roofs is a dangerous task. However, if you think safety, and work safely, you will get the job done.

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